A10 Box 6 File 4 Doc.

The CIA has publicly stated that it never interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald. Numerous allegations have arisen over the years since President Kennedy's assassination that Oswald either had been or should have been debriefed by the CIA upon his return from the Soviet Union since he appeared to be in a position to provide useful information due to the ~~length~~ unusual duration of his residence and employment there. The claim [response] that no records exist which indicate a debriefing of Oswald has stimulated speculation that Oswald may have had some kind of Agency relationship either because the contact was not reported through normal channels or because the CIA communicated with Oswald in another manner which alleviated [obviated (?) / alleviated (?)] the necessity for a routine debriefing.

[Margin note: stimulated by the allegation, not response]

The HSCA attempted to determine: 1) whether Oswald was, in fact, interviewed by the CIA upon his return from the Soviet Union; 2) whether there is an official report of the interview if one was conducted; and 3) the reasons why Oswald would not have been interviewed if that was, in ~~reality~~ [actuality] the case.

10147-10176

In response to the Warren Commission's request of ______,

John A. McCone, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, submitted an affidavit stating that the CIA had had no relationship of any kind with Lee Harvey Oswald. The affidavit, dated 18 May 1964, certifies that "the Agency never contacted him, interviewed him, talked with him, or received or solicited any reports or information from him, or communicated with him, directly or indirectly, in any other manner." (Warren Exhibit #870, 17 H 866) ¶ Mr. McCone's testimony before the Warren Commission on May 14, 1964 gave the same assertion as to the Agency's lack of contact with Oswald. Mr. McCone was asked specifically whether the CIA had had any contact with Oswald during his stay in the Soviet Union. McCone replied, "No; not to my knowledge, nor to the knowledge of those who would have been in a position to have made such contact, nor according to any record we have." (Warren Commission Hearings & Exhibits, 5 H 123) ¶ He also responded negatively to the question of whether the CIA had any personal contact with Oswald subsequent to his return to the United States. (Ibid.)

Was it, or was it not in response to Commission written request

Malone's affidavit was ~~partially~~ partially instigated by the appearance of an article on 28 February 1964 in the Northern Virginia Sun which made the following allegation:
~~alleged that~~ "State Department records show that Oswald had several meetings with the CIA representative in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. During this period, the assassin was seeking to renounce his citizenship. One State Department cable, No. 234, dated November 2, 1959, reports that Oswald was interviewed by the CIA and other embassy officials" (CIA FOIA Document #609-786).

The CIA memoranda reporting this information both internally and to the Warren Commission advises that this allegation is totally unfounded. (Ibid. and CIA FOIA Document #610-263). The memos explain that the reference to the State Department "cable" is erroneous and that the document to which the article was referring is undoubtedly a State Department "despatch", No. 234, which was dated 2 November 1959 from the U.S. embassy in Moscow. (Ibid.) (not a new paragraph)
According to the internal memorandum, the despatch contained no statement or reference that Richard E. Snyder, who was the Second Secretary of the

U.S. embassy in Moscow and the only person mentioned by name in the dispatch, had any CIA connection. (CIA FOIA Doc. #[illegible])

However, the memorandum acknowledged that Holt Snyder and Edward L. Freers, the State Department official who signed the dispatch, had had some past connection with the Agency. Snyder had been employed by the CIA for less than one year in 1950 when he resigned in order to assume a position with the State Department. (Ibid.) Although the CIA's ~~Freers had never~~ records indicate the existence of ~~actually been employed by the~~ a history of Agency interest in Freers, he was never actually employed by the CIA. (Ibid.)

The record of the Central Intelligence Agency throughout the years is consistent with the position as stated to the Warren Commission that the CIA never interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald. A 9 February 1972 letter from Bernard Fensterwald to the Assistant Director of the CIA requests any records pertaining to a "debriefing" of Oswald by or on behalf of the CIA following his return from the Soviet Union. This request for information contrary to the Agency's previously stated position appears to be generated by a statement made by Richard Helms on 14 April 1971 before the American Society of Newspaper Editors that "... if there is a chance that if a private citizen travelling abroad has acquired foreign information that can be useful to the American policymaker, we are certainly going to try to interview (CIA FOIA Doc. # 961-927-A6).

Since Fensterwald cites Oswald as appearing to be such a person.

There follows an exchange of letters between Fensterwald and Angus M. Thuermer who was the Assistant to the Director of the CIA in which Thuermer refers Fensterwald to the testimony of McCone and

Helms before the Warren Commission. Thuermer states that "the testimony is still valid; therefore the information you request does not exist." (CIA FOIA doc #962-927-AN). When Fensterwald responds to this answer with a request for Thuermer's own position with respect to the records rather than "conclusions based upon statements of persons other than yourself", Thuermer ends the exchange by stating that his previous response was "a simple declarative statement on the best possible authority that the Agency never had any contact with Oswald and that, therefore, the information sought by you in your letter of February 9th does not exist and never did exist." (CIA FOIA doc #970-927-AP).

In April of 1978, the HSCA requested that the CIA provide a statement as to whether Lee Harvey Oswald was ever contacted, spoken to or interviewed by anyone directly or indirectly representing the CIA. (HSCA letter to CIA, 4/5/78). The Agency responded in the same manner it had used in responding to previous requests from other sources, by way of referring the Committee to the testimony of Helms and McCone before the Warren Commission and to McCone's affidavit denying any Agency contact with Oswald. (CIA Statement Regarding the Contact [illegible] 78).

A 25 November 1963 CIA Memorandum (now located in LHO's 201 file as CIA FOIA #435-173-A) is the only documented evidence of any CIA interest in interviewing Oswald. The memorandum written by Thomas B. Casasin, stated: "As soon as I had heard Oswald's name, I recalled that as Chief of the 6 Branch I had discussed sometime in Summer 1960 - with the then Chief and Deputy Chief of the 6 Research Section the laying on of interviews through KUJUMP or other suitable channels. At the moment I don't recall if this was discussed while Oswald and his family were en route to this country or if it was after their arrival." (CIA FOIA Document #435-173-A).

Casasin was interviewed by the HSCA staff on August 17, 1978. In this interview, he stated that he worked as Chief of the 6 Branch from September 1960 until his reassignment in September 1962. (HSCA Staff Interview of CIA Employee, 8/17/78, p1) He advised that the function of the 6 Branch was to amass information from defectors concerning details about Soviet life which could

then be used to assist persons working inside the Soviet Union. (Ibid.) The 6 Branch also relied upon the CIA's Contacts Division and the FBI as sources of this type of information, as well as collecting information from the State Department and the press concerning Americans in the Soviet Union. (Ibid., p.4)

During this interview, (Casasin) recollection of the discussion mentioned in the 25 November 1963 memo was that it took place during the last days of his tenure with the 6 Branch. (Ibid., p.4) This would have placed the discussion sometime in July 1962. He stated that the date cited for the discussion in the memo must have been erroneous as he was travelling with his family between assignments in the summer of 1960 and did not begin his assignment with the 6 Branch until September of that year. (Ibid., pp. 4-5)

(Casasin) stated that at the time the Oswald case was discussed, he assumed that Oswald must have been sent out of the Soviet Union by the KGB. (Ibid., p.4) Therefore, exercising caution, he did not attempt

to debrief Oswald but suggested that Oswald be debriefed by (KUJUMP) which represented the Office of Operations, an office which debriefed persons through its Contacts Division or "other suitable channels" by which he meant the FBI or the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Ibid., pp. 4-5) He stated that he did not believe that this had been done at that time because this type of information would have been routinely passed on to the CIA and to this section if such a debriefing had occurred (Ibid., p. 6) Whatever information he had on Oswald at the time was in the form of State Department dispatches. (Ibid.)

In the memorandum, (Casasin) states that he told his subordinates something to the effect of "Don't push too hard to get the information we need, because this individual looks odd." (CIA FOIA Document #435-173-A). He explained in the interview that this statement reflected the CIA's assessment of Oswald based on the unusual facts that Oswald was permitted by the Soviets to remain in the USSR and was further permitted to marry a Soviet citizen (HSCA Staff Interview of CIA Employee, 5/17/78, p. 5).

(Lesasii) stated that his interest in Oswald as expressed in the memorandum was just a lead and that it was not unusual that there had been no follow-up regarding a debriefing of Oswald. (Ibid., p. 9) He wrote no memo at the time of the discussion as it was not customary to write memos regarding leads that were discussed and subsequently ~~[illegible]~~ dismissed as being ~~[illegible]~~ unimportant. (Ibid.)

(Walter P. Haltigan), the person to whom (Lassain's) 25 November 1963 letter was written, was then employed by the CIA as Chief of the Soviet section of the (Paris station). ~~(HSCA Staff Interview of CIA Employee, 6/13/78, p.1)~~ (Haltigan's) recollection ~~was~~ is [illegible] ~~in an interview with HSCA staff members~~ that because of the nature of (Lassain's) position under (non-official) cover, (Lassain) frequently wrote informal memos such as the one in FOIA #435-173-A which were then passed on through the use of cut-outs to the (Paris station). (Ibid.) These memoranda would then be forwarded to CIA Headquarters, generally by (Haltigan). However, in this particular instance, Robert G. (Kempnell), who served under (Haltigan), received and forwarded the memorandum to Headquarters as (Haltigan) was in the hospital. (Ibid.)

~~[illegible] (Ibid.)~~

(Haltigan) expressed the general Agency opinion that had the CIA wished to contact a returning defector, it would have done so through

the Contacts Division of the Office of Operations but that it was not standard operating procedure to interview returning defectors because this job fell within the FBI's jurisdiction. (Ibid., p. 2)

¶ (Thomas) also told the HSCA
(~~Lasasin~~) stated that the CIA had a specific interest in Minsk as it was ~~because~~ known that the city contained some type of special design plants that may have involved aviation, nuclear energy or bacteriological warfare. (~~HSCA Staff Interview of CIA Employee, pp. 5-6~~). Consequently, although (Lasasin) ~~he~~ did not ~~believe~~ think that LHO was working in any type of security facility, he believed that anyone who would have been in the area of those plants would have been of interest to the Agency. (Ibid., p. 6). However, even with the presence of the design plants, Minsk was not identified as a security or military priority area. (Ibid.).

(Lasasin) believed that the CIA maintained a large volume of information on the Minsk radio factory in which Oswald worked. (Ibid.) This information was stored in the Office of Research and Reporting. ~~This fact was corroborated by another CIA employee.~~ Another former CIA employee, [Donald Deneslya] DO who worked in the Foreign Documents Division in the Soviet Branch of the Directorate of Intelligence in 1962

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told the HSCA that he specifically recalled collecting intelligence regarding the Minsk Radio Plant. (HSCA [illegible] Interview of CIA Employee, 9/2?/78, p.1). In fact, Deneselya claims that, during the summer of 1962, he reviewed a contact report from representatives of the CIA's New York field office who interviewed a former Marine who had worked at the Minsk Radio Plant following his defection to the USSR. (Ibid.) This person, who Deneselya believes may have been Oswald, had been living with his family in Minsk. (Ibid.) Deneselya advised the Committee that the contact report was filed in a volume concerning the Minsk Radio Plant which should be retrievable from the Industrial Registry Branch, which was then a component of the Office of Central Reference in 1962. (Ibid.)

The HSCA requested that the CIA provide the Committee both the above-described contact report and the volume of materials concerning the Minsk Radio Plant. (HSCA [illegible] to CIA [illegible]). A review of the documents in the volumes on the Minsk Radio Plant revealed that no such contact report existed in that file. (Outside Contact Report of 10/17/78, JFK Doc. #012,023).

The file review did indicate that in 1975, Daniel Sheehan had made a similar request and was informed by the CIA that no such report existed. (Ibid.)

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The Select Committee on Assassinations requested that the Central Intelligence Agency provide a written statement indicating whether the CIA, from 1958-1963, interviewed or debriefed returning American defectors to the Soviet Union as a matter of standard operating procedure. (HSCA letter to CIA, 4/5/78). The Agency was also requested to indicate the circumstances under which an interview would be initiated if such interviews were not conducted as standard operating procedure. (Ibid.)

The Agency's response indicated that the Counterintelligence Staff reviewed the files of 117 persons who had "defected" to the USSR between 1958 and 1963 and who had subsequently returned to the United States. (CIA Memorandum, B. Hugh Tovar to Special Assistant to DCI for External Oversight, 4/20/78). This review revealed that only ten of the 117 individuals had been contacted by any component within the CIA and that the CIA had no procedure for the systematic debriefing of such persons. (Ibid.) Instead, the Agency stated that the contacts that were initiated appeared to be based on "opportunity and circumstance." (Ibid.)

Another memorandum explained that the CIA had no standard operating procedure with respect to debriefing returning American defectors

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as the Agency relied upon the FBI for reporting the results of interviews it may have conducted in connection with its responsibility for internal security matters. (CIA Memorandum, Tovar to Special Asst. to DDO for External Oversight, 5/25/78). The Agency further stated that there were no manuals or regulations for the period of 1958-1963 which specifically address the subject of American defectors. (Ibid.)

In fact, the ten persons with whom the CIA admitted having had contact did not strictly meet the specific requirements as requested in the HSCA's request. Seven of the ten individuals had not actually defected to the USSR during the period 1958-1963, but had resided there for at least ten years prior to 1958. (CIA Memo from Tovar, 4/20/78) Three of the ten individuals returned to the United States and were subsequently debriefed after 1963. (Ibid.) The CIA employee who conducted the research in preparation for the Agency's response told the HSCA that the requirements he had utilized in arriving at his conclusions had been somewhat broader than those requested in order to include all those persons regarded as defectors who were residing in the Soviet Union during the time period in question, rather than just those who actually defected at that time. (HSCA Staff Interview of CIA Employee, 7/21/78).

The House Select Committee on Assassinations conducted a review of defectors' files in order to determine whether defectors other than Oswald were routinely debriefed upon their return to the United States. The Committee requested that the CIA provide a list of persons travelling to the Soviet Union during the period from 1958 to 1963, including both visitors and those persons considered by the Agency to be "defectors." ([illegible] to CIA) In response the CIA provided a computer listing of 380 individuals entitled "U.S. Persons Who Have or May Have Defected to the USSR Between 1958-1963." (Attachment to 27 January 78 Memo, E. Hugh Stover to S.A. to ERO) The Agency stated that this listing represented U.S. persons, including some non-U.S. citizens who owed some measure of allegiance to the United States, who had either defected or had shown some intention of defecting to the USSR within the requested time period. (27 January 78 [illegible])

As this list was compiled from a more detailed computer program

on American defectors, a more detailed description concerning these individuals was requested and provided in an expanded version of the original list. This machine listing included the following information when relevant or available for each individual: name, date and place of birth, 201 file number, date arrival in Soviet Union, departure fr. Soviet Union, employment in Soviet Union, most current address, and other miscellaneous information compiled from the individual's 201 file and/or third agency documents regarding this individual. ("Expanded Computer List of U.S. Persons....")

The Committee compiled a list of persons who appeared, from the information available in the Agency's expanded list, to be U.S. citizens born in the United States, who defected or attempted to defect to the Soviet Union between the years of 1958 and 1963 and who returned to the United States within the same period of time. In addition, the Committee included individuals from an October 1960 State Department request for information from the CIA regarding those persons whom they considered to be defectors to the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc countries. (25 [illegible])

Like Tennyson's "Brook" goes on and on and on

The HSCA requested files on twenty-nine individuals who fit the above-described criteria and the CIA provided files on twenty-eight individuals on whom they maintained records. ~~Both~~ These 201 files were reviewed as well as any existing Domestic Contact Division files regarding these persons. The HSCA file review revealed that, in the case of six of the individuals, there is no indication that they ever returned to the United States. In some of these cases, the files contained a report from a source who observed or spoke with the subject and then reported the contact to the CIA, but there is no indica- of direct contact with any of these persons on the part of the CIA.

In regard to the other twenty-two defectors, the file review ~~indicates~~ shows that there is no record of CIA contact with eighteen of them. Again, four of these files contain reports by sources who advised the Agency of their contact ([illegible]). One file regarding a former military person contains a report of a debriefing conducted by military intelligence. ([illegible])

The circumstances of the CIA's contact with the four remaining defectors differed in each case. The file of one individual reflects that he had

actually been living in the USSR since 1933 and returned to the United States in 1962. He was debriefed in 1964 by a CIA officer using [Department of Defense] cover after applying for employment in response to a newspaper advertisement. (Rev. of Irving [illegible] 201 file) Another returning defector, Harold Citrynell, was unwittingly interviewed by a CIA officer [in the American embassy] in Copenhagen upon his departure from the Soviet Union en route to the United States. While Citrynell's file indicates that the Agency considered it desirable that a full and controlled debriefing by the CIA and FBI be conducted and Angleton wrote to the FBI suggesting a joint debriefing, there is no evidence in Citrynell's 201 file nor in any DCD documents which suggest further contact on the part of the CIA.

More extensive debriefings were conducted of the other two defectors. Robert E. Webster, a plastics expert with the Rand Development Corporation whose defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 was highly publicized, returned to the United States in June of 1962. ([illegible]) Webster had been employed in the Soviet Union at the Leningrad Scientific Institute of Polytechnic Plastics.

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Shortly after his return to the United States, Webster was debriefed in this country by representatives from the CIA's Office of Operations and SR/6 ~~and~~ in conjunction with representatives from the Air Force. It was decided that a more extensive debriefing was in order and Webster was subsequently brought to the Washington, D.C. area where he was debriefed for a period of two weeks. The debriefing reports include a chronology of Webster's life and the CIA's assessment of him as well as a large body of information regarding life in the Soviet Union, Webster's work there and biographic information on persons he had met during his residence there

Likewise, Libero Ricciardelli who had lived in the Soviet Union for nearly four years, was contacted for purposes of debriefing ~~shortly~~ soon after his return to the United States in late June of 1963. His initial debriefing included such subjects as his motivation to defect to the USSR as well as well as activities engaged in during his Moscow stay, relocation from Moscow to Kiev and general aspects of life such as residence controls and costs. While the CIA felt it was unfeasible to debrief Ricciardelli

more thoroughly due to his current status of attempting to regain U.S. citizenship, the Agency expressed an interest in eliciting more information on such topics as cost of living, medical care, consumer goods, light wage, transportation and restrictions upon travel within Kiev.

It becomes clear from the review of files on these defectors that debriefing of defectors by the CIA was, in fact, somewhat of a random occurrence. However, in the instances in which the Agency did choose to debrief returning American defectors, the Agency appeared to be interested in topics of general interest regarding life in certain areas of the Soviet Union. In this regard, the persons who were debriefed were similar to Oswald in that they defected and returned within the same general time period and each spent his time in the Soviet Union in areas of interest to the CIA.

It appears, from an examination of all available materials, that Lee Harvey Oswald was not interviewed by the CIA following his return to the United States from the Soviet Union. Although persons in a branch of the Soviet Russia Division expressed an interest in interviewing Oswald, they never followed up on this interest. There is also no indication that the Collection Division of the Office of Operations interviewed Oswald.

While the CIA did conduct interviews of some tourists who visited the Soviet Union during the period 1959-1963 as well as some American citizens who defected to the Soviet Union and then returned to the United States, there was no standard policy to interview all persons in either category. Thus, the fact that Oswald was not interviewed was more the rule than the exception according to procedures followed by the CIA at that point in time.

HSCA was advised that at time of Oswald's return, there were many Soviet citizens leaving USSR & debriefing program probably concentrated on them.